

INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY Ivan Izenberg DATE 10/5/81

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAIGON 28129

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: SAIGON 27955

SAIGON 27975 - Perifurts

SUB: NATIONAL ASSEMBLY: JUNE 13 SESSION

RSR

1. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MET JUNE 13 TO DEBATE AND VOTE ON CHANGES IN UPPER HOUSE ELECTION LAW REQUESTED BY DIRECTORATE IN ITS JUNE 9 MESSAGE TO ASSEMBLY (REFTELS). ASSEMBLY ACCEPTED TWO OF DIRECTORATE PROPOSALS: A) SENATORIAL ELECTION TO BE HELD ON SAME DATE AS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION AND B) INCLUSION OF

PROVISION DISQUALIFYING ENTIRE LIST IF ONE OF ITS MEMBERS IS FOUND TO BE PRO-COMMUNIST. ON THIRD ITEM, ASSEMBLY DECIDED VOTERS SHOULD CAST BALLOTS FOR ONLY TWO RATHER THAN ALL SIX SENATE LISTS AS PROPOSED BY DIRECTORATE. CHAIRMAN PHAN KHAC SUU RULED THAT FOURTH ITEM MENTIONED IN DIRECTORATE MESSAGE, A PROPOSAL THAT SENATE BE REDUCED IN SIZE FROM 60 TO 40 MEMBERS, NEED NOT BE DISCUSSED SINCE IT WAS NOT FORMAL REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT.

2. DEBATE ON ALL THREE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS WAS HEATED, ALTHOUGH POSITIONS TAKEN BY DEPUTIES HAD BEEN STATED MANY TIMES BEFORE. IN DISCUSSION OF DATE OF SENATE ELECTIONS, OPPONENTS OF DIRECTORATE PROPOSAL ARGUED THAT ELECTION OF SENATE AND PRESIDENT ON SAME DAY IS UNDEMOCRATIC, CONTRARY

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-2- SAIGON 28129, JUNE 14

TO ARTICLE 116 OF CONSTITUTION, AND WILL NOT GIVE CANDIDATES

ENOUGH TIME TO PREPARE. SUPPORTERS OF CHANGE (MOST OF WHOM WERE MEMBERS OF DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE BLOC) CLAIMED NONE OF THESE OBJECTIONS VALID. ASSEMBLY VOTED FIRST ON CONSTITUTIONALITY OF DIRECTORATE AMENDMENT (WHICH, TRUONG TIEN DAT NOTED, ASSEMBLY IS NOT CONSTITUTIONALLY COMPETENT TO DO) AND DECIDED THAT IT DID NOT VIOLATE NATION'S BASIC CHARTER. ASSEMBLY THEN AGREED NEARLY UNANIMOUSLY THAT DECISION TO ACCEPT OR REJECT DIRECTORATE AMENDMENT SHOULD BE BY ROLL-CALL. RESULT OF BALLOTING WAS 48 IN FAVOR OF DIRECTORATE AMENDMENT, SETTING SENATE ELECTIONS ON SAME DAY AS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AND 38 OPPOSED. MOST OF YEARS WERE CAST BY DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE DEPUTIES.

3. ASSEMBLY THEN DEBATED DIRECTORATE PROPOSAL THAT VOTERS BE ALLOWED TO CHOOSE SIX SENATE LISTS. PROPOSAL RECEIVED VIRTUALLY NO SUPPORT IN ASSEMBLY. EVEN DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE DEPUTIES OPPOSED MEASURE, AGREEING THAT IT COULD RESULT IN DOMINANCE OF SENATE BY ONE ORGANIZED GROUP. INSTEAD, DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE ADVOCATED A FORMULA - REJECTED DURING BLOC'S WALKOUT ON JUNE 6 - ALLOWING VOTERS TO CHOOSE TWO

LISTS. LA PHUOC SANG ARGUED THAT THIS WOULD ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF THREE BLOCS IN SENATE - PRO-GOVERNMENT, OPPOSITION AND NEUTRAL - AND WOULD PREVENT DOMINANCE OF SENATE BY ONE GROUP ON ONE HAND, OR EXCESSIVE FRAGMENTATION ON THE OTHER. SEVERAL NON-DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE DEPUTIES SPOKE IN FAVOR OF SANG PROPOSAL, VIEWING IT AS PREFERABLE TO DIRECTORATE ALTERNATIVE. DESPITE OBJECTIONS OF LY QUY CHUNG AND A FEW OTHERS WHO INSISTED THAT ASSEMBLY SHOULD ONLY CHOOSE BETWEEN

ORIGINAL WORDING (ONE BALLOT PER VOTER) OR DIRECTORATE AMENDMENT, ASSEMBLY AGREED TO VOTE ON DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE FORMULA. IT WAS APPROVED BY VOTE OF 64 IN FAVOR, 14 OPPOSED.

4. ASSEMBLY THEN TOOK UP THIRD DIRECTORATE PROPOSAL, RE-INSTATEMENT OF CLAUSE BANNING ENTIRE SENATE SLATE IF ONE OF ITS MEMBERS IS FOUND TO BE COMMUNIST OR PROCOMMUNIST-NEUTRAL. DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE BLOC, MANY OF WHOM ARE RATHER NOISY ANTI-COMMUNISTS, SUPPORTED DIRECTORATE AMENDMENT

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(CLAUSE WAS DELETED DURING JUNE 6 ABSENCE OF DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE). IT WAS OPPOSED BY VARIETY OF NON-DEMOCRATIC-

ALLIANCE DEPUTIES INCLUDING PHAN QUANG DAN, HOANG XUAN HUU AND LY VAN HIEP, WHO ARGUED THAT DEFINITION OF PERSON WHO IS PRO-COMMUNIST OR HAS ACTED IN INTERESTS OF COMMUNISM IS DIFFICULT TO MAKE AND COULD EASILY GIVE RISE TO INJUSTICES. WHEN PUT TO VOTE ONLY 37 DEPUTIES VOTED TO MAINTAIN ASSEMBLY'S FINAL VERSION OF PROVISION. THUS, DIRECTORATE AMENDMENT STANDS.

5. ASSEMBLY WILL RECESS FOR SEVERAL DAYS PENDING DIRECTORATE PROMULGATION OF PRESIDENTIAL AND SENATORIAL ELECTION LAWS. NEW SENATE ELECTION DATE WILL NECESSITATE COMPLETE REVISION OF ELECTION CALENDER. SCHEDULE PROPOSED BY DIRECTORATE IN ITS JUNE 9 LETTER TO ASSEMBLY, WHICH WILL PRESUMABLY GO INTO EFFECT, INCLUDES FILING DEADLINE OF JUNE 30 FOR SENATE CANDIDATES.

6. COMMENT: DEMOCRATIC-ALLIANCE BLOC WAS ON WINNING SIDE IN EACH CASE. ASSEMBLY DECISION TO ALLOW VOTERS CAST BALLOTS FOR TWO SENATE LISTS RATHER THAN SIX AS PROPOSED BY DIRECTORATE MAY ALSO BE READ AS VICTORY FOR PRIME MINISTER KY, WHO WAS IN MINORITY WHEN DIRECTORATE DECIDED TO REQUEST THAT PARTICULAR CHANGE.

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INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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SECRET SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 28090

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EXDIS

REF: STATE 210835 AND 210584

1. I HAD A MEETING OF APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR
WITH PRIME MINISTER KY THE AFTERNOON OF JUNE 14 AND
I EXPECT TO SEE GENERAL THIEU LATER THIS EVENING.

2. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER I HAD THREE MAIN QUESTIONS
THAT I WISHED TO RAISE WITH HIM. I SAID THAT WE HAD SEEN
INCREASING SIGNS OF ARBITRARY CENSORSHIP IN THE PRESS
AND OTHER RESTRICTIONS WHICH MIGHT LIMIT THE CAPABILITIES
OF CANDIDATES TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON AN EQUITABLE
BASIS DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. I RECOGNIZED THAT
THERE WERE GENUINE NATIONAL SECURITY REASONS FOR

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 28090 SECRET
CENSORSHIP IN WARTIME, BUT IN RECENT WEEKS THE CENSOR-
SHIP HAD BEEN FAR BROADER THAN THIS AND APPEARED
TO BE DIRECTED AGAINST THE STATEMENTS OF CANDIDATES AND
OTHER MATTERS CONNECTED WITH THE ELECTIONS. I NOTED
IN PARTICULAR THAT THE CHIEF OF STATE'S OWN REMARKS ON
THESE SUBJECTS HAD EVEN BEEN CENSORED OUT OF THE LOCAL
PRESS. I TOLD KYI THOUGHT IT WAS VITAL THAT ON THIS
QUESTION, AS ON OTHER MATTERS RELATED TO THE ELECTIONS,
AN IMPRESSION NOT BE CREATED THAT ARBITRARY AND REPRESSIVE
MEASURES WERE BEING USED, I ADDED THAT THE FOREIGN PRESS
WAS ALREADY BECOMING AWARE OF THIS SITUATION AND THAT
WE HAD EVEN HAD INDICATIONS OF CONCERN FROM CONGRESSMEN
AND OTHER CIRCLES IN THE U.S. I SAID I WAS SURE THAT HE
WOULD APPRECIATE WHAT A DIFFICULT SITUATION WOULD ARISE
THESE MEASURES REACHED SUCH PROPORTIONS AS TO BRING INTO
QUESTION HIS GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS REGARDING FAIR
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-2- Saigon 28090 SECTION ONE OF TWO, June 14

3. KY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME OVERLY ENTHUSIASTIC STEPS TAKEN BY THE

CENSORS BUT SAID THAT WE HAD TO UNDERSTAND THAT IN THIS COUNTRY THE PRESS, WHETHER

PAGE 3 RUMJIR 28090HS E C R E T

OVER CLANDESTINE, WOULD ENGAGE IN UNLIMITED CHARACTER ASSASSINATION IF THEY WERE NOT RESTRAINED AND THIS WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE AN UNSTABILIZING EFFECT ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION. HE SAID THAT IT WAS NOT LIKE THE U.S. AND WE HAD TO UNDERSTAND THIS. HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY, HOWEVER, THAT HE REALIZED CENSORSHIP OF MATTERS RELATING TO CANDIDATES AND THE ELECTIONS CAMPAIGN HAD TO BE FAIRLY ADMINISTERED. HE SAID THAT HE ALREADY HAD SOMEONE FROM GENERAL THIEU'S PRESS STAFF IN THE CENSORSHIP OFFICE AND IT WAS HIS INTENTION TO HAVE EACH OF THE CANDIDATES ASSIGN A REPRESENTATIVE TO THIS OFFICE TO MAKE DECISIONS REGARDING CENSORSHIP. I AM RAISED WITH KY THE REPORTS WE HAD HAD THAT REQUESTS FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW NEWSPAPERS BY CANDIDATES WERE BEING REFUSED. KY SAID THAT HE DID INDEED NOT INTEND TO ALLOW AN MORE NEWSPAPERS TO BE ESTABLISHED, THAT THIS HAD BEEN GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, NOTING THAT THERE WERE 27 ALREADY IN SAIGON AND THAT THERE WERE PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CANDIDATES TO USE EXISTING NEWSPAPERS.

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 28090 S E C R E T

I THEN TOLD KY THAT I HAD ALSO BEEN GREATLY DISTURBED BY OTHER REPORTS INDICATING THAT MEASURES WERE BEING TAKEN BY HIS SUPPORTERS TO USE QUESTIONABLE TACTICS AND PRESSURE TO ASSURE HIS ELECTION. HE ITERATED THAT THE U.S., WITH ALL ITS INVESTMENT HERE IN MEN AND MONEY, COULD NOT TOLERATE THE USE OF MEASURES WHICH WOULD MAKE A FAIR VOTE IMPOSSIBLE. I CITED SPECIFICALLY RECENT REPORTS WE HAD HAD THAT GENERAL LOAN AND HIS MEN WERE BRINGING PRESSURE THROUGH POLICE AND MILITARY SECURITY CIRCLES TO ASSURE THAT THE NECESSARY VOTE WAS OBTAINED FOR KY'S TICKET OR TO REMOVE OFFICIALS WHO DID NOT COOPERATE. WE DID NOT DENY SPECIFICALLY THAT GENERAL LOAN HAD BEEN ENGAGED IN SUCH PRESSURE BUT SAID HE HAD CAUTIONED LOAN AS A FRIEND AND LOYAL SUPPORTER.

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-3- Saigon 28090 SECTION ONE OF TWO, June 14

5.3NI SAID THAT THE THIRD SUBJECT I WISHED TO RAISE WAS A MATTER WE HAD DISCUSSED BEFORE NAMELY, OUR DEEP CONCERN FOR THE UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THE STABILITY OF THE COUNTRY. I RECALLED HIS EARLIER STATEMENT TO ME AND TO AMBASSADOR BUI DIEM THAT HE WOULD

PAGE 5 TUMJIR 28090 S E C R E T
DISCUSS PRIVATELY WITH GENERAL THIEU THE MATTER OF TWO MILITARY CANDIDATES AND TRY TO WORK OUT A SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENT THAT WOULD NOT RISK SPLITTING THE ARMED FORCES. I OBSERVED THAT NO SUCH TALK HAD APPARENTLY BEEN HELD AND THAT THE PROBLEM SEEMED NO NEARER SOLUTION. I SAID BOTH HE AND GENERAL THIEU HAD GIVEN ASSURANCES TO THE PRESIDENT AT GUAM THAT THERE WOULD BE NO SPLIT IN THE MILITARY AND BOTH HAD RENEWED THESE ASSURANCES TO ME REPEATEDLY SINCE THAT TIME. IT NOW APPEARED LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WOULD BE IN FACT TWO MILITARY CANDIDATES AND THAT DESPITE GENERAL VIEN'S STATEMENT THAT THE ARMED FORCES WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN POLITICS, THE REALITY WAS THAT THIS SITUATION WOULD INEVITABLY HAVE A DEEP EFFECT ON MILITARY UNITY. I POINTED OUT THAT INEVITABLY THERE WOULD BE SUPPORTERS FOR BOTH HIM AND THIEU WITH THE RANKS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND THAT THIS COULD ONLY HAVE A DIVISIVE EFFECT WHICH WOULD IMPEDE THE VITAL WAR ROLE THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES MUST PLAY. I UNDERLINED THE EXTREMELY SERIOUS EFFECT POLITICAL SQUABBLES AMONG THE MILITARY WOULD HAVE ON U.S. PUBLIC OPINION

PAGE 6 RUMJIR 28090 S E C R E T
AND SUPPORT AT A TIME WHEN OUR LOSSES WERE HEAVY AND THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR WAS UNSETTLED. I ASKED KY WHAT HE PLANNED TO DO ABOUT TRYING TO RESOLVE THIS PROBLEM WITH THIEU BEFORE IT WAS TOO LATE.

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 SAIGON 28090

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EXDIS

REF: STATE 21083 AND 210584

6. KY SAID THAT THE MATTER WAS GIVING HIM SOME CONCERN ALSO. AT THIS MEETING WITH THE FOUR CORP COMMANDERS AND CEN, IN OF THE MILITARY MEMBERS OF THE DIRECTORATE AT QUI NHON ON JUNE 12, THE CORPS COMMANDERS REPORTED THAT THERE WAS BEGINNING TO BE POLITICAL TALK AMONG THE JUNIOR OFFICERS. HE INSTRUCTED THEM TO TELL THE OFFICERS TO KEEP CLEAR OF POLITICS AND GET BACK TO FIGHTING THE WAR AND IMPRESSED UPON THEM THE NECESSITY FOR NOT ALLOWING THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN TO SPLIT THE ARMY. I SAID THAT THIS WAS PRAISEWORTHY BUT DID NOT RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. KY THEN REMARKED THAT HE HAD IN FACT BEEN TRYING TO ARRANGE

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 28090 S E C R E T
A PRIVATE TALK WITH THIEU, BUT THE LATTER HAD NOT RESPONDED. HE SAID HE WOULD TRY ONCE AGAIN TO ARRANGE THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND WOULD SINCERELY TRY TO WORK OUT A SOLUTION THAT WAS ACCEPTABLE AND THAT WOULD AVOID A SERIOUS SPLIT IN THE ARMED FORCES. I SAID I HOPED HE WOULD SUCCEED IN THIS IMPORTANT EFFORT AND COMMENTED THAT THERE WAS SURELY A ROLE FOR BOTH OF THEM IN THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT OF VIET-NAM. THEY HAD WORKED TOGETHER CLOSELY AND EFFECTIVELY FOR TWO YEARS AND SHOULD BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO WORK FOR THE GOOD OF THE COUNTRY.

7. IN DISCUSSING THIS ENTIRE QUESTION OF THE ELECTIONS AND THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD EMERGE FROM IT, I TOLD KY OF MY STRONG CONVICTION THAT THE END RESULT MUST BE A STRENGTHENING OF THE COUNTRY THROUGH A BROADLY-

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-2- Saigon 28090 SECTION TWO OF TWO, June 14

BASED GOVERNMENT COMPRISING UNITY OF THE MILITARY AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ELEMENTS. I SAID I HAD BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE REPORTS OF THE UNDERSTANDING REACHED BETWEEN KY AND HUONG REGARDING USE OF EACH OTHER'S SERVICES, WHICHEVER ONE MIGHT WIN THE ELECTION. I THOUGHT THAT WAS A VITAL PRINCIPLE WHICH SHOULD

PAGE 3 RUNJIR 28090 S E C R E T
BE ENCOURAGED FOR ALL THE CANDIDATES. I WOULD ALSO LIKE TO SEE A STATEMENT BY ALL CANDIDATES THAT THEY WOULD ACCEPT THE VERDICT OF THE ELECTORATE AND WOULD SUPPORT WHATEVER GOVERNMENT EMERGED AS A RESULT OF FAIR AND FREE ELECTIONS. KY CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD REACHED SUCH AN UNDERSTANDING WITH HUONG AND CONCLUDED WITH THE STATEMENT THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT WHAT WAS NEEDED AS THE FINAL RESULT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESS WAS NOT A STRONG MAN BUT A STRONG REGIME.

BUNKE

ADVANCED COPY PASSED WHITE HOUSE SS/O 6/14/67

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SECRET SAIGON 28170

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EXDIS

1. IN ONE HOUR TALK WITH THIEN LAST NIGHT AFTER HIS RETURN FROM I CORPS I TOOK UP WITH HIM THE MATTER OF THE UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AS I HAD WITH KY EARLIER. I RECALLED TO HIM THE PRESIDENT'S VERY DEEP CONCERN THAT THE ELECTORAL PROCESS SHOULD NOT LEAD TO A DIVISION WITHIN THE MILITARY AND THE REPEATED ASSURANCES BOTH HE AND PM KY HAD GIVEN ME IN THE PAST THAT THIS WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO HAPPEN. I SAID THAT IN RECENT DAYS WE HAVE HAD REPORTS FROM THE PRESS AND FROM PEOPLE THAT HAVE TALKED WITH HIM THAT HE WAS PLANNING SHORTLY TO ANNOUNCE HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE PRESIDENCY. SINCE PM KY HAD LONG AGO ANNOUNCED

PAGE 2 RUMJIR 28170 SECRET
HIS CANDIDACY IT SEEMED TO ME THAT WE WILL BE FACED WITH A SITUATION TO BRING ABOUT A SPLIT IN THE ARMED FORCES. I REALIZED THAT GENERAL VIEN HAD ANNOUNCED THAT THE MILITARY WOULD NOT SUPPORT ANY POLITICAL CANDIDATES FOR PRESIDENT AND I WELCOMED THIS STATEMENT OF INTENTION. I FEARED, HOWEVER, THAT THE REALITY WAS THAT THE PRESENTATION OF TWO CANDIDATES FROM THE ARMED FORCES BOTH OF WHOM HAD CLOSE FRIENDS WITHIN THE FORCES WOULD INEVITABLY RESULT IN A DIVISION OF LOYALTY AND SUPPORT AMONG THE MILITARY.

2. I SAID THAT I HOPED AND HAD BEEN LED TO BELIEVE THAT HE AND THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD DISCUSS THIS DIFFICULT QUESTION PERSONALLY AND PRIVATELY IN ORDER TO FIND AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION BUT I UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY HAD NOT DONE SO. THEREFORE I HAD TO SAY TO HIM VERY FRANKLY THAT I THOUGHT IT WAS URGENT AND ESSENTIAL FOR HIM AND THE PRIME MINISTER TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER DIRECTLY WITH A VIEW TO FINDING A SOLUTION THAT WOULD ASSURE THAT THE ARMED FORCES AND THE COUNTRY WOULD NOT BE DIVIDED. I INFORMED THIEN THAT AS I HAD BEEN UNABLE TO SEE HIM EARLIER I HAD ALREADY TALKED TO PRIME MINISTER KY AND IMPRESSED UPON HIM THE VITAL NECESSITY OF DISCUSSING THIS MATTER

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-2- Saigon 28170, June 15

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FRANKLY TOGETHER AND ARRIVING AT A SOLUTION.

3. IT WAS NOT OUR DESIRE TO TAKE SES ON THE QUESTION OF WHO SHOULD BECOME PRESIDENT BUT RATHER TO MAKE SURE THAT THE CONSTITUTIONAL ELECTORAL PROCESS STRENGTHENED THE COUNTRY AND BROUGHT ABOUT TRUE NATIONAL UNITY RATHER THAN FURTHER DIVIDING THE NATION. I FELT SURE THAT AS A TRUE PATRIOT HE COULD COUNT UPON HIM TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF ACHIEVING THESE OBJECTIVES AND TO DO HIS BEST TO BRING THEM ABOUT.

4. THIEN REPLIED AT LENGTH AND FOR HIM WITH CONSIDERABLE EMOTION. HE SAID THAT HE NOT ONLY RECOGNIZED THE NECESSITY FOR UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES BUT COULD ASSURE ME THAT THE MILITARY WOULD REMAIN UNITED WHETHER THERE WERE TWO OR THREE OR FOUR CANDIDATES FROM THE ARMED FORCES. THEY WANTED TO STAY CLEAR OF POLITICS AND GET ON WITH THE WAR. IT WAS NOT THE ARMED FORCES BUT WHAT SOME PEOPLE WERE DOING WHICH WAS TENDING TO CREATE DISUNITY IN THE COUNTRY AND TO MAKE PEOPLE DOUBT THAT THE ELECTIONS WOULD BE FAIR AND HONEST. HE THEN REFERRED DIRECTLY TO SOME OF KY'S ACTIVITIES, THE LATTER'S ATTEMPTED USE OF SOME MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES SUCH

PAGE 4 RUMJIR 28170 S E C R E T
AS GENERAL TRI AND GENERAL THANG IN SUPPORT OF HIS CANDIDACY, THE FLAGRANT ABUSE OF CENSORSHIP, AND GENERAL LOAN'S ACTIVITIES. HE QUOTE HOW CAN YOU EXPECT THE PUBLIC TO BELIEVE THAT ELECTIONS WILL BE FAIR AND HONEST WHEN THE REMARKS OF THE CHIEF OF STATE ARE CENSORED? WHAT DO YOU THINK THE PUBLIC REACTION IS WHEN PEOPLE SEE SIGNS READING PRIME MINISTER KY'S GOVERNMENT IS THE GOVERNMENT OF THE POOR. IT IS NOT KY'S GOVERNMENT, THE DIRECTORATE IS THE GOVERNMENT AND I HAPPEN TO BE ITS CHAIRMAN UNQUOTE.

5. THIEN WENT ON TO DESCRIBE LOAN'S ACTIVITIES IN BRINGING PRESSURE TO BEAR ON THE PROVINCIAL HEADS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE AND ON PROVINCE CHIEFS TO SUPPORT KY. HE SAID THAT GENERAL THANG AND THE RD ORGANIZATION WILL BE THE NEXT TO FEEL THE PRESSURE. HE ADDED THAT ALL THESE ACTIVITIES OF KY AND HIS ASSOCIATES WERE WIDELY KNOWN TO THE PRESS AND THE PUBLIC GENERALLY AND HE SAID QUOTE YOU DO NOT HAVE TO TAKE MY WORD FOR IT. YOU HAVE AMPLE MEANS OF INTELLIGENCE AND YOU CAN FIND OUT FOR YOURSELVES UNQUOTE.

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-3- Saigon 28170, June 15

6. THIEU THEN WENT ON AT SOME LENGTH TO STRESS HIS VIEW OF THE IMPERATIVE NEED FOR FAIR AND HONEST ELECTIONS IF THE PEOPLE WERE TO HAVE ANY CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. OTHER WISE HE SAID THERE WOULD BE A RETURN TO THE DAYS OF DIEM AND EVENTUALLY THERE WOULD BE ANOTHER COUP.

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7. I RECALLED TO HIM THE RECENT STATEMENTS APPEARING IN THE PRESS THAT HE WOULD BECOME A CANDIDATE AND SAID THAT IN OUR LAST CONVERSATION HE HAD INDICATED THAT HE HAD NOT YET DEFINITELY MADE UP HIS MIND. I ASKED HIM IF HE HAD YET DONE SO AND HE REPLIED THAT HE HAD INTENDED

TO BECOME A CANDIDATE AND WOULD HAVE A CIVILIAN RUNNING MATE. HE REPEATED HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENT TO ME THAT HE HAD LITTLE MONEY AT HIS DISPOSAL WOULD NOT ASK FOR THE SUPPORT OF ANY MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND HAD AS YET NO ORGANIZATION AND THEREFORE HIS CHANCES OF BEING ELECTED WERE NOT GOOD. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE WITH HIM TO BECOME A CANDIDATE AND TO DO WHAT HE COULD TO ASSURE HONEST ELECTIONS.

AS THINGS STOOD NOW HE COULD NOT GUARANTEE HONEST ELECTIONS YET AS CHIEF OF STATE HE WOULD BE HELD RESPONSIBLE. IF HE WAS NOT ABLE TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE HE WOULD PREFER TO RESIGN RATHER THAN BE BLAMED FOR SOMETHING HE WAS UNABLE TO CONTROL.

8. I SAID THAT WE SHARED HIS CONVICTION THAT ELECTIONS SHOULD BE FAIR, FREE AND HONEST BUT WE ALSO FELT THAT IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT UNITY OF THE ARMED FORCES SHOULD BE MAINTAINED AND THE WAR PROSECUTED WITH THE UTMOST VIGOR. I THEREFORE FELT IT WAS URGENT THAT HE AND PM KY SHOULD GET TOGETHER WITHOUT DELAY AND TRY TO COME TO SOME UNDERSTANDING.

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FOR GRANTING THAT BOTH WERE WELL INTENTIONED AND SINCERELY BELIEVED THAT UNITY OF THE MILITARY COULD BE MAINTAINED IF THERE WERE MORE THAN ONE MILITARY CANDIDATE, I COULD NOT ACCEPT THIS TO BE A REALISTIC VIEW OF THE SITUATION. IT COULD NOT BE EXPECTED THAT THE US COULD CONTINUE THE HUGE CONTRIBUTION IT WAS MAKING IN MEN, MONEY AND RESOURCES UNLESS THE VIETNAMESE THEMSELVES AVOIDED INTERNAL DISSENSION AND EXERTED THEIR UTMOST EFFORTS ALSO. THIEU REPLIED

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QUOTE SS, THAT IS TRUE YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS TREMENDOUS AND PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT YOUR INTEREST IN THE SITUATION HERE IS SO GREAT THAT IF THE ELECTIONS ARE NOT HONEST YOU WILL SHARE PART OF THE BLAME. UNQUOTE.

9. COMMENT: THIEU WAS NON-COMMITTAL ABOUT HIS WILLINGNESS TO TALK WITH KY. IT IS APPARENT THAT HIS RESENTMENT AT KY'S AGGRESSIVENESS AND ACTIVITIES RUNS VERY DEEP. WHILE IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW WHAT IS REALLY IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND HIS STATEMENT THAT HE WOULD BE A CANDIDATE IS THE MOST CATEGORICAL HE HAS YET MADE TO ME. WHETHER THIS WILL BE HIS FINAL DECISION IS DIFFICULT TO SAY. THIS MAY DEPEND ON WHAT OTHER FACTORS ARE BROUGHT INTO PLAY. NEVERTHELESS FOR THE PRESENT WE MUST ASSUME THAT HE WILL BE A CANDIDATE AND PLAN OUR NEXT STEPS ACCORDINGLY. THESE WE ARE CONSIDERING AND WILL HAVE FURTHER COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.

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SS FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
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SAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SAIGON 28220

P SUBJ: THIEU CANDIDACY AND OTHER PRESIDENTIAL RACE DEVELOPMENTS

USIA
NSC REF: SAIGON 28094

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CIA 1. VIETNAM PRESS ACCOUNT OF THIEU PRESS CONFERENCE IN HUE JUNE 14
NSA (REFTELL ADDS REPORT THAT THIEU STRESSED HIS DETERMINATION TO
DDO ASSURE FAIR FREE AND HONEST ELECTION. HE ASSERTED HE WOULD NEITHER
AJD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS POSITION NOR ASK ANY MILITARY MAN OR

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GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL TO CAMPAIGN FOR HIM. HE ADDED HE WAS MOTIVATED TO RUN BY HIS LOVE FOR THE LAND AND HIS SPIRIT OF RESPONSIBILITY AND SACRIFICE, AND THEREFORE WHETHER HE WOULD WIN OR NOT DID NOT MATTER.

2. THIEU RELATED THE ELECTION TO PEACE, SAYING PEACE COULD BE RESTORED ONLY IF THE FUTURE ELECTED GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO REALIZE DEMOCRACY; TO DO SO THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO BE ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE IN A COMPLETELY FREE, FAIR AND ABSOLUTELY HONEST ELECTION. THIEU SAID THAT AS CHAIRMAN OF THE DIRECTORATE HE WAS DETERMINED TO ENSURE THE FAIR, FREE AND HONEST NATURE OF THE COMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AND AFFIRMED THAT IF HE FAILED TO DO THAT, HE WOULD RATHER RESIGN THAN ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY BEFORE HISTORY FOR PUTTING THE NATION ON THE PATH TOWARD DEFEAT BY THE COMMUNISTS.

3. ON RETURN TO TAN SON NHUT FROM HUE EVENING JUNE 3; THIEU AGAIN CONFIRMED CANDIDACY TO NEWSMEN AND SAID HIS PROGRAM WOULD INCLUDE FOUR POINTS: (1) RESTORATION OF PEACE, (2) REALIZATION OF DEMOCRACY, (3) IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND MOST IMPORTANTLY (4)

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ACHIEVEMENT OF NATIONAL SOLIDARITY TO BRING ABOUT FAVORABLE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE TO DEFEAT COMMUNISTS.

4. THIEU'S STATEMENTS WERE APURENTLY FULLY REPORTED BY VIET-NAM PRESS AND RUN UNCENSORED IN ALL BUT THREE VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE PAPERS -- THAN CHUNG (SOUTHERN NEUTRALIST), DOI THOEI EDITED BY BROTHER-IN-LAW OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER GENERAL NGUYEN-9 548, AND TIEN (MODERATE).

5. CIVILIAN POLITICIANS WHO HAD BEEN GOSSIPING THAT THIEU WOULD WITHDRAW NOW THINK HE IS IN TO STAY, AND TAKE HEART FROM PROSPECT OF DIVIDED MILITARY VOTE. SAIGON POST EDITORIAL OF JUNE 16 EXPRESSED GENERAL FEELING THAT QUOTE THEIDITION OF (THIEU'S) NAME TO THE LIST OF ENTRIES SHOULD MAKE THE CONTEST ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT TO WIN AND A FURTHER GUARANTEE FOR AN HONEST ELECTION UNQUOTE

6. MEANWHILE JNE 16 SAIGON POST REPORTS THAT PREMIER KY ANNOUNCED DURING JUNE 15 VISIT TO THE MEDICAL STUDIES CENTER IN CHOLON THAT HE HAD REQUESTED LEAVE WITHOUT PAY AS COMMANDER OF THE AIR FORCE, AS REQUIRED BY ELECTORAL LAW. KY WILL BE TEMPORARILY REPLACED BY HIS DEPETY BRIG. GENERAL TRAN VAN MINH; HE WILL STAY ON AS PREMIER AS PERMITTED BY THE LAW.

7. KY DENIED IN PRESS INTERVIEW AT MEDICAL CENTER THAT HE HAD ORDERED INFORMATION MINISTRY TO PAINT SLOGANS READING QUOTE THE

GOVERNMENT OF NGUYEN CAO KY IS THE GOVERNMENT OF THE POOR UNQUOTE WHICH HAVE SUDDENLY APPEARED ALL OVER THE COUNTRY IN LAST FORTNIGHT. KY CLAIMED QUOTE THESE SLOGANS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY THE PEOPLE UNQUOTE.

8. INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT FREENESS AND FAIRNESS OF COMING ELECTION ALSO REFLECTED ACCORDING JUNE 16 SAIGON POST IN COMING FORMATION, OF QUOTE A NEW NATIONALIST FRONT WITH THE PRIME OBJECTIVE OF FIGHTING FOR A TRULY FREE ANDUST ELECTION UNQUOTE. POST ARTICLE IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL LEADER OF FRONT ONLY AS A LAWYER, BUT JUNE 14 VIETNAMESE-LANGUAGE PAPER SONG NAMES FRONT AS QUOTE FRONT TO STRUGGLE FOR A FREE AG FAIR ELECTION MAT TRAN TRANH DAU

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BAU CU TU DO VA TRONG SACH) UNQUOTE AND LEADER AS ATTY NGUYEN TUONG BA, WHO IS MEMBER OF PEOPLE-ARMY COUNCIL, VNQDD LEADER, AND UNSUCCESSFUL RUNNING MATE OF DR. PHAN QUANG DAN IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY ELECTION OF SEPTEMBER 1966 IN GIA DINH PROVINCE. SAIGON POST ARTICLE ALSO REPORTS THAT A NEWLY-ESTABLISHED COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN AND CITIZEN'S RIGHTS, NOT FURTHER IDENTIFIED, HAVE ANNOUNCED A MEETING AT THE THONG NHUT THEATER SUNDAY JUNE 17 (SIC) ON SUBJECT QUOTE HOW TO INSURE A TRULY FREE ELECTION UNQUOTE.

9. IN COMMUNIQUE TO PRESS REPORTED IN JUNE 15 SAIGON DAILY NEWS, PHAN KHAC SUU DENIED RUMOR OF RIFT BETWEEN HIMSELF AND DR. DAN AND PRAISED DAN HIGHLY. SUU TOOK OCCAION TO STRESS THAT QUESTION OF WHO WILL WIN ELECTION IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN ISSUE OF ENSURING CORRECT CONDUCT OF CAMPAIGN AND PROPER POLLING QUOTE SO THAT THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT WILL BE REALLY FREELY ELECTED BY THE PEOPLE, AND HAVE THE NECESSARY PRESTIGE, AT HOME AND ABROAD, TO ACHIEVE WIDE UNITY AND PEACE FOR THE NATION UNQUOTE.

10. AN QUANG BUDDHISTS REPORTED BY JUNE 16 SAIGON DAILY NEWS TO HAVE DECIDED TO BACK TRAN VANMUONG IN SEPTEMBER ELECTIONS. NEWS CITES PAGODA SOURCES AS STATING THE DECISION WAS MADE AT RECENT MEETING ATTENDED BY THICH THIEN HOA AND THICH TRI QUANG AMONG OTHERS. THREE IMPORTANT MONKS -- THICH DON HAU, THICH MAT NGEN AND THICH THIEN SIEU (ALL THREE ARE CLOSE TO TRI QUANG) -- SAID TO HAVE THREATENED TO RESIGN RATHER THAN BACK CANDIDATE WHO, LIKE HUONG, IS NOT PRO-BUDDHIST AND HAS SHOWN REGIONALIST AND SEPARATIST TENDENCIES. THEIN HOA ADMITTED TO PRESS THE EXISTENCE OF MINOR DIVERGENCES BETWEEN AN QUANG AND HUE MONKS BUT DENIED THEY RELATED TO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND CLAIMED THE ISSUE HAD NOT YET COME UP BEFORE THE ORGANIZATION.

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